



## CREATING SOMETHING FROM NOTHING: A Dedicated Civil-Military Platoon at the Battalion Level

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It has become so common to claim that more than conventional military operations are necessary to win a counterinsurgency that it is hard to remember a time when any military officer may have seriously thought otherwise. In testimony before the Senate Armed Service Committee in September 2008, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mike Mullen summed up the idea that conventional operations are not sufficient when dealing with an insurgency by saying that, “we can’t kill our way to victory...” While most Army leaders would agree with Admiral Mullen’s statement, it seems that we too often simply give lip service when allocating maneuver assets in direct support of “non-lethal missions.” If the missions of Civil Affairs, Information Operations, Provincial Reconstruction Teams and others are ultimately intended to be the primary focus in a counterinsurgency, then these operations should be appropriately resourced. Though there are many ways that we can improve resourcing for these efforts, this paper will solely address the issue of increasing transportation availability for these units.

This paper argues for the creation of composite civil-military platoons (CMP) in theater. These platoons will provide dedicated transportation support for non self-mobile non-lethal personnel and while also giving the battalion commander an additional maneuver unit that can focus on civil-military operations at levels above company. These platoons would be formed around a core of the battalion’s attached Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Soldiers and be augmented with Soldiers detailed from within the battalion. Though it may seem counterintuitive, taking a small number of Soldiers from maneuver companies to form these platoons will actually increase the ability of a company commander to execute his mission by reducing the demands placed on his company to support battalion movement requests and creating another non-lethal enabler that he can draw upon. As a result, he will be able to place greater focus on his core counterinsurgency tasks

of providing security and training host nation security forces. Just as importantly, by taking advantage of their ability to move across the battlefield independently, non-lethal personnel will have more flexibility and predictability in planning their missions, ultimately leading to enhanced effectiveness.

Though it may sound novel, the CMP model is an evolution of battle-tested concepts that originated with the 3rd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. The 3-1 CAV effectively utilized their “Team Enabler,” a combination of Civil Affairs, PSYOP and Human Intelligence Collection Teams in Mada’in Qada. The “Team Enabler” model was further refined in summer and fall of 2008 in Iraq’s Diyala Province by the 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment. This unit successfully formed and employed a “non-lethal platoon” from the assigned vehicles of attached Civil Affairs and PSYOP teams as well as the squadron’s Full Spectrum Effects Platform (FSEP) variant Stryker. This paper advocates codifying these models in such a



Courtesy photos

*The author (left) and a U.S. Army linguist discuss the progress of a power generation project in the south Dora neighborhood of Baghdad in February 2008. By making civil affairs teams and civil-military personnel more mobile, they will then be able to conduct more frequent and better inspections, which will help increase the accountability of contractors.*

way that all types of maneuver units can take advantage of this concept.

A battalion CMP can be utilized for a number of missions that are usually tasked to maneuver companies. The most obvious example is that now Civil Affairs teams are able to inspect the status of their projects more regularly and at more appropriate times than would otherwise be available if they were dependent on other units for transportation. In addition, with the use of a battalion CMP, Tactical PSYOP Teams (TPTs) will have greater control over the time and place that their products are disseminated. Instead of always having to integrate dissemination into a maneuver company's patrol schedule (which can certainly be an effective technique and should not be abandoned completely), TPTs will be able to conduct pinpoint dissemination much more often and produce a greater effect on the target audience. In addition, for battalion-level key leader engagements not requiring the commander's presence (such as meeting with medium-sized business owners, city council members, etc.), the CMP can provide transportation for a battalion S-5 or other staff member without further burdening a company commander. A CMP could also be used to meet many brigade movement requests, such as brigade level key leader engagements, that might otherwise be passed onto a land-owning company.

#### **Assumptions**

This proposal is based on the following assumptions. The author asks readers to submit any comments that challenge the validity of these assumptions:

- \* Combat patrols require three vehicles and 12 personnel;

- \* Battalion has attached one Civil Affairs team with four personnel and one MRAP/M1114;

- \* Battalion has attached one PSYOP team with three personnel and one MRAP/M1114;

- \* Battalion has a staff member whose primary duty is civil-military operations (BN S-5/S-9); and

- \* Battalion has sufficient linguist support to provide CMP with interpreter.

CMP patrol requirements will be less than for a typical line company and likely be expected to complete three-to-five missions a week of short duration (under four hours) rather than six or more patrols a week of 6-10 hours that most line platoons conduct.

Based on these assumptions, we have a shortfall of five personnel and one vehicle that must be overcome from within a battalion. The issue of the vehicle shortfall can be solved in a number of ways (such as using MRAPs or M1114 from a battalion headquarters company that are typically used mostly for battalion combat logistic patrols), and this article will not go into this issue in depth. The more controversial and difficult to solve problem is how to come up with five Soldiers from an already overtaxed battalion. Below are a number of ways that units can come up with this additional manpower without taking away too much combat strength from line companies.

#### **Manning Methods:**

- 1) Have a dual-hat battalion S-5/S-9 serve as CMP patrol leader.

By having the battalion's non-lethal officer serve in the additional capacity of patrol leader, we are able to provide leadership for the platoon without taking away additional combat power from a line platoon. This course of action may seem unrealistic and could be viewed as an overburdening of an already stressed staff officer, but it actually has a number of advantages and has been proven successful in combat under 3-2 SCR. First, because the battalion S-5/S-9 is probably the officer driving most mission requirements for maneuver support of non-lethal operations, he would be on most missions that the civil-military platoon would execute anyways, even if he was not dual-hatted as the patrol leader. In a manner similar to the way that most company commanders lead their own tactical command posts (TACs) without issue, the battalion S-5/S-9 should be able to handle the additional stress of being a patrol leader. In addition, the extra work load that will come from being a patrol leader and a staff officer will be mitigated by the unique nature of the CMP. The CMP's small size — likely less than 15 Soldiers — will reduce the amount of administrative work the patrol leader must conduct. This demand will be further reduced by the fact that at least half of the CMP's Soldiers will come from attached, rather than assigned, units such as Civil Affairs and PSYOP. Furthermore, because many S-5/S-9s are senior lieutenants and junior captains who have already served successfully as platoon leaders, they can be expected to better handle the stress



*A Civil Affairs Team Soldier makes his way to an engagement in the south Dora district of Baghdad in February 2008.*

of wearing two (albeit large) hats.

- 2) Draw Soldiers exclusively from headquarters companies.

This technique would draw upon Soldiers who serve in staff sections to perform additional duties as members of the CMP. Many readers will raise the concern that Soldiers who are serving on staff sections already have enough duties without the additional responsibility of conducting patrols. While this is a valid possibility, I believe that it is mitigated by the expected shorter duration of most CMP patrols and the greater degree of predictability that non-lethal missions afford. Careful planning and a rotation schedule should allow the utilization of 3-5 members of a headquarters company for missions with the CMP without taking away too much from their primary duties.

- 3) Each company can release one Soldier for duty with the civil-military platoon.

A preferable technique would be to task each company in a battalion with providing one Soldier to serve in the CMP. These Soldiers could either serve in the CMP in a long-term capacity (and possibly be attached to the battalion HHC as a result) or could only serve for a week or a month and then return to their parent unit. Each technique has its own drawbacks and strengths and the best method is based on the particular manning situation of each unit. In order to promote unit cohesion and proficiency, many Army leaders prefer to avoid moving Soldiers around unnecessarily, but this may not always be possible. (It may also be worth considering that duty in a CMP, where patrols are

expected to be less frequent and of shorter duration than most maneuver platoons conduct, could be considered a way to give some tired Soldiers an opportunity for less taxing duty without taking them out of the fight completely.)

4) Utilize Tactical HUMINT Teams as permanent or semi-permanent parts of the CMP.

This technique was used by 3-1 CAV in support of their Team Enabler concept. They used their Human Intelligence Collection Teams in a manner similar to the way I recommend the utilization of CA and PSYOP units. While this method was successful for 3-1 CAV and does address the manpower shortfall, it degrades the ability of THT to support combat operations. It is a technique that I recommend only be used with caution as it is likely that a THT can contribute more to mission success directly supporting combat operations in an intelligence collection capacity than as part of a civil-military platoon.

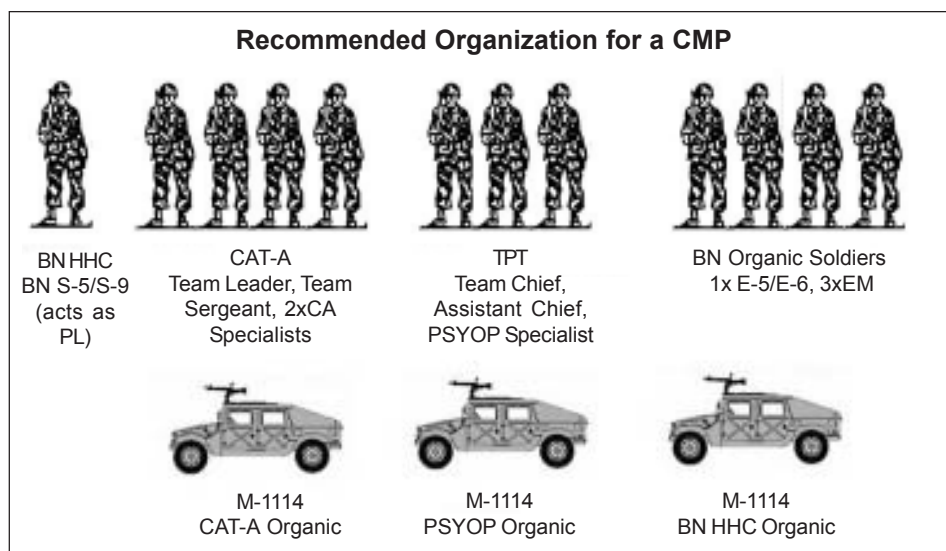
5) Only create one or two CMPs per brigade combat team rather than a single CMP per battalion.

This technique would significantly reduce the manpower taskings necessary to man the CMPs on a per battalion basis. While it is certainly preferable to have two CMPs per BCT as opposed to having none, it would have the obvious, but manageable, drawback of increasing the number of missions the CMP must support. More importantly is the issue of how to coordinate the actions of the CMPs across battalion boundaries. Careful planning and extensive coordination will be required to ensure unity of effort across all logical lines of operation.

Utilizing a combination of the above techniques, I recommend the CMP task organization illustrated in Figure 1 for most units. METT-TC (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, time, civilian considerations) analysis could result in a significantly different organization, however.

### Challenges

While many readers may believe that the CMP concept does not have sufficient combat power, many units have been frequently forced to conduct combat patrols with just as many Soldiers or even fewer. As a comparison, a 12-Soldier composite non-lethal platoon would have the same number of



**Figure 1**

Soldiers as most military transition teams (or more in many cases). If METT-TC analysis suggests (or higher headquarters dictates) that more personnel are required for the CMP to safely conduct their mission, the addition of, say, two Soldiers to the CMP would only be a relatively small increase to the battalion manning burden.

One of the dangers of utilizing a CMP is the possibility that some company commanders will now assume that they no longer have to take responsibility for civil military tasks. While the CMP concept will reduce the burden of transporting battalion level non-lethal personnel around the battlefield, companies still need to continue to conduct sphere of influence engagements, mentor security forces and monitor essential services. It is important to remember that the CMP will supplement, rather than replace, the civil-military operations of land-owning companies.

It is also equally important to ensure that the actions of the CMP do not conflict with the efforts of the companies. For instance, I previously pointed out that a CMP would make it easier for PSYOP to conduct independent dissemination. Without coordination, this technique could easily create conflicting messages across a battalion's battlespace. Careful utilization of the targeting process will help prevent "information fratricide" and ensure unity of effort. Having the battalion S-5/S-9 also serve as the CMP patrol leader will help alleviate this concern as he is the staff member with the best situational awareness

of non-lethal efforts across the entire battalion area of operations.

### Conclusion

Though the CMP is certainly an unorthodox technique, the challenges of Iraq and Afghanistan require such unconventional solutions. While force protection is an obvious concern, the unique way in which the CMP will be employed will go a long way to obviating this potential problem. Though many commanders are understandably reluctant to give up any combat power, detailing a few Soldiers to a CMP has the possibility of greatly enhancing their efforts and the effectiveness of the battalion's civil-military operations.

**Author's Note:** This article was written primarily with Iraq in mind, and while it is certainly possible to transfer the CMP concept to Afghanistan from a pure task organization standpoint, I feel that the conditions in Afghanistan will likely mean that this concept will be less applicable. The absence of roads and lower levels of security in many parts of the country do not create the more permissive environment that is required for the CMP to be effective. I invite more knowledgeable readers to comment on the applicability of the CMP to the current situation in Afghanistan.

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